

17 recommended films on camelids and camelid-keepers (20 August 2024)

The "Perspectives on Pastoralism Film Festival" is organised on behalf of the Coalition of European Lobbies for Eastern African Pastoralism (CELEP) primarily by the German Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture (DITSL), Agrecol Association for AgriCulture & Ecology, Vétérinaires Sans Frontières (VSF) Belgium and the Centre for Research and Development in Drylands (CCRD) in Kenya. The third edition, organised as part of the build-up to the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) in 2026, includes a special thematic focus on films about camelids, intended to contribute to the International Year of Camelids (IYC) in 2024. The film-festival team selected 17 films on this topic for showing at events highlighting camelids during the IYC – and subsequently. The documentary films from Africa, Andes, Asia and Australia depict camelid husbandry, production and trade of animals and processed products, links between camelids and their herders and environment, and associated participatory research. The films range from 1:18 to 59 minutes in duration. Most have been produced between 2019 and 2023. They are listed below in chronological order, starting with those from 2023, and – for each year – in alphabetical order according to title. If you are interested in organising your own screening of films on camelids, you can request any of the films in the list below – free of charge – from Anthony Denayer (a.denayer@vsf-belgium.org) and Ann Waters-Bayer (a.waters-bayer@ditsl.org).

Title	Country/ies where filmed	Language	Year made	Length of film	Filmmaker	Description	Comments about screening
Tarlamt: salt caravan to Bilma	Niger	Tuareg; no subtitles; English intro + inter-titles	2024 (short version), filmed 2000	33 min	Sarah Lunaček	The Tuareg of Kel Ewey used to travel each year over 600 km across the Tenere Desert to exchange millet for dates and to buy salt in the Bilma oasis; they then sold the salt in the south and bought millet. This film follows a caravan of 176 camels belonging to 13 families that travelled in 2000 to trade in Bilma. A valuable historical document of pastoral tradition and local knowledge, showing the endurance needed by both people and animals to travel and trade across the desert, it highlights how camels can go long stretches without water and can drink salty oasis water and browse thorny trees. With an introductory text and short inter-titles but no narrative, this ethnographic film shows the everyday activities involved in the journey and the hard labour of the camels en route and their recreation in the oases.	Good documentary to show use of camels in desert trade and the interaction between nomads and their animals; quiet film without subtitles that allows concentrated attention in observing the details of the work with camels, well captured by the filmmaker.
Living in harmony with nature: pastoralists in the Andes of Peru	Peru	English, Quechua, Spanish	2023	48:06 min	Petra Dilthey	A vet from Lima visits alpaca herders in Tolconi (5000 masl), where a close relationship of humans and animals guarantees their mutual survival. The vet talks about animal breeding and healthcare, the danger of losing animal biodiversity (fleece colours), herders' rich ethnobotanical knowledge and the challenge to gain fair prices for their high value products. Several herding families give insights into their way of life, explaining how well-organised alpaca husbandry works, how they move the herd to avoid overgrazing, how the animals are shorn and the fleeces sold, and home-based spinning and weaving. Clearly shows the links between livestock, environment and local livelihoods and culture and reveals important role of women in caring for herds while their husbands work as day labourers for cash.	Film fairly long, so unlikely to be included for screening together with several films, but presentable when time permits. Non-native English speakers may have difficulty understanding the Peruvian narrator (veterinarian) speaking English (no English subtitles). Same topic (with same vet) also covered in shorter film "Living with alpacas in the Peruvian Andes".

The move	India	English	2023	9:09 min	Pinar Ekinci	In the Banni grassland in Gujarat, filmmaker nomad Pinar observes the daily life of Rabari pastoralists living in the desert of western India. She spends some time with three families and is fascinated by their simple life and how they are connected to their land, people and animals. While witnessing how the Rabari women handle moving their households, families and camels from one site to the next, she questions what home means to her and whether one can feel at home while moving around the world. The Rabari do not come to word; the foreign narrator is concerned with her own search for home – a personal and poetic reflection on mobility.	Short film that would fit well into screening of several films together; shows the daily life of women pastoralists from the perspective of a non-judgemental outsider.
Old craftsmen	Iran	Persian / English subtitles	2023	6 min	Mohsen Sahrizi	Short focused film – much of it in slow motion – with detailed description of making a camel saddle and packing a camel, narrated by the elderly saddlemaker himself. Shows the skills of the saddlemaker and his pride in the beauty of the saddle and the camel. A film from 2023, revealing that these handicraft skills still exist today.	Short film that would fit well into screening of several films together.
International Year of Camelids 2024	various	English	2023	1:18 min	FAO	Very short introductory film for International Year of Camelids (IYC), showing different types of camelids kept in various environments and cultures. Explains how camelids contribute to food security, nutrition, local livelihoods and the wider economy while having a strong cultural and social significance for communities in the Andean highlands and in the drylands of Africa and Asia. The IYC seeks to raise awareness of the role of camelids in building resilience to climate change.	Sequences are very short and sometimes difficult to follow, but the fast pace of the film makes it good for opening a film festival.
<i>Pasto raiz pasto semilla</i> (Root pasture seed pasture)	Argentina	Spanish with English subtitles	2023	39:29 min	Mariana Quiroga Mendiola	Subtitled "Dialogues of knowledges in the Puna", the film shows the process of Participatory Action Research (PAR) with Andean communities keeping llamas and sheep in the high grasslands of northwestern Argentina in a context of high climatic variability and climate change. Depicts interactions between herders and researchers studying soil-plant-water-animal interactions. A good introduction to the sociocultural and ecological conditions of the pastoralists, particularly of the women, giving glimpses of people's lives in natural dialogue with each other.	Slow-paced, people-oriented film about research approach, most suitable for researchers.
The camel herders of Rajasthan	India	Hindi, English	2022	26 min	Mark Michel	Documentary film on Raika camel-keepers moving through the semi-desert of Rajasthan to find good pasture and water. Highlights their respectful interaction with nature and their deep local knowledge of plants, also for treating camel diseases. Shows close relationship between people and livestock, and the importance of animals in the local culture. Documents a very valuable tradition with an important past, but also with a possible future as a sustainable way of keeping livestock in dry areas, making productive use of marginal land by transforming naturally growing plants into high-value food	Longer film about the same people as in "The Kumbhalgarh Raika story."
Living with alpacas in the Peruvian Andes	Peru	Quechua, English	2022	26 min	Mark Michel	Documentary on alpaca-keepers making efficient use of marginal lands in high-altitude areas (5000 masl) in the Andes, depicted largely from the herders' perspective. Clearly highlights the advantages of keeping alpacas over hooved livestock like sheep and cattle in this region. Shows the roles and functions of alpacas for the local community, the close bonds between the people and their animals, and how the communities have further developed in response to climate change (causing melting of ice and resulting feed scarcity). Some gender aspects are addressed (processing of wool by women).	Note that some information is not correct, e.g. alpacas were domesticated & Andean irrigation systems developed earlier than stated in this film. Facilitated by a visiting vet from Lima, the film suggests that herders regularly receive such visits, which is not the case; these herders were involved in a development project.

The last of their kind: Turkey's nomads	Turkey	English, German	2022	12:00 min	Nevin Sungur & Gunnar Köhne	Transhumant herders in Turkey spend winter on the Mediterranean coastal plains and move each spring with their goats and camels into the Taurus Mountains. But the government, military and landowners constantly put new obstacles in their path. The resolute 63-year-old woman Pervin Savran leads the transhumant movements and the herders' fight for their rights to continue their traditional herding system and lifestyle.	Short film that would fit well into screening of several films together. Depicts challenges faced by herders common in many countries. Shows strong woman in leading role related to transhumance.
The custodians of the Andean gold	Bolivia, Peru	English	2021	32:25 min	Marcella Minozzi	In the Andes over 3800 masl, Quechua and Aymara pastoralists raise alpacas and sell the fleeces. Depicts well the daily lives and important role of women herders. Contrasts ecological pastoralism and non-ecological open-face mining practised by men with no workers' rights and damage to people's and animals' health through pollution, yet local families need income from both to survive – a widespread situation of camelid-keepers in the region. Shows artisanal craft yet low income and small-scale producers' self-organisation to reach more lucrative markets. Highlights the need to support pastoralists so that their production system and associated traditions are not lost.	Second part of film on mining is somewhat long. Some mistakes in English subtitles (e.g. referring to "cattle" in film with no cattle). Good for showing gender aspects in pastoralism in the Andes.
The rare Indian swimming camels under threat	India	English	2021	2:45 min	Deepak Sharma	The Kharai are a rare breed of camel found in the salt marshes of Kutch District in Gujarat, West India. They swim up to 3 km in the shallow seas to reach their grazing land - the region's mangroves. But now local herdsman say it's taking longer and getting harder to find mangroves where their camels can graze. Salt companies in the region are blocking tidal water and slowly drying up mangroves. This is endangering the lives of the camels as well as their future.	Shows how diverse are the conditions in which camels are kept.
Camels in outback Australia	Australia	English	2020	9:55 min	Prue Adams/ Australian Broadcasting Corporation (screening permission not yet given)	In Central Australia, camels introduced by settlers but no longer needed for transport became feral. Drought drives them out of the desert and into ranches, where they compete with cattle for precious water. Hundreds of feral camels are culled daily; the carcasses are left to rot. To avoid this waste, some ranchers seek new uses for camels, not only by selling the meat of culled animals but also by raising camels for milk. But the road to market is not easy.	Short film that would fit well into screening of several films together, a perspective from Australia, seeking to prevent waste of potential food and to create a new future for camels on that continent.
<i>Caravanas de las alturas</i> (<i>Caravans of the heights</i>)	Argentina	Spanish (with English subtitles)	2019	6:47 min	Bibiana Vilá	Very good documentary made up of beautiful and informative photos with commentary on a disappearing aspect of camelid culture: the caravans in the Andes that used to connect people from the highlands and lowlands, transporting llama fleece from Bolivia to Argentina to trade for food, medicines and other purchased products. Shows several-day trip to Santa Catalina in Jujay, with stops for water from rivers or ponds and grazing.	A good short historical document of Andean heritage; could be shown together with 30-min film of caravans in Niger; and/or with the story of the Raikas in India.
Tes River Mongolians	Mongolia	Mongolian with English subtitles	2019	59 min, also 19-min and 8-min versions	Namuulan Gankhuyag & Tseelei Enkh-Amgalan	The Tes River flows from the Bulnai Mountains through three Mongolian provinces (Khuvsgul, Zavkhan, Uvs) to Lake Uvs, registered as UNESCO Natural World Heritage site. Herder families living along the river believe it is God's blessing, as source of their livelihood and water for humans and animals. This film shows the lifestyle and movements of Mongolian herding families, rotational grazing of rangelands, and local people's attitudes to and respect for their natural environment, by depicting the activities of three families at the head, middle and end of the Tes Valley.	Made by local filmmakers in Mongolia, which proposed IYRP to UN, showing everyday pastoralist life; should be included in every film festival for IYRP and IYC; available in 3 versions (59, 19 and 8 min) to select depending on time available for screening.
The Turkana	Uganda	English	2019	3:20 min	Loren Cardeli (loren@agrowinculture.org)	Turkana camel and cattle pastoralists in northern Uganda face problems of climate change, particularly dealing with drought. Mainly an interview with an elderly Turkana man.	Short film that fits well into screening of several films together; brings message clearly and briefly for a general public.

The Kumbhalgarh Raika story	India	English	2017	9:07 min	Lokhit Pashu Palak Sansthan	Raika pastoralists have been herding camels in Rajasthan for centuries, but their traditional way of life is now under threat. A German-led NGO set up to advocate for Raika pastoralists' rights has started a dairy for camel milk to help the Raika sustain their livelihood.	Project-focused but brings key messages about camelid-keeping very clearly. About same project as in Film B; suitable to show when not enough time for longer film.
The return of the camelids: the gods of the Andes	Andes	English	2015	50 min	François Gérard Brey & Patrice Desenne	Small camelids – domesticated llama and alpaca and wild vicuña and guanaco – provided wool and meat for Andean people; llamas were historically used in transport caravans. Mechanisation, urbanisation and hunting caused their decline but today there is a revival. Thanks to their valuable fibre, these camelids – including the protected wild guanacos – provide a source of income for local communities. The film brings comprehensive information on all four camelid species in the Andes, including insights into how alpacas are now used in industrialised livestock keeping and for medical purposes.	An external view – local producers do not come to word. Too long for showing together with several other films together. Mainly for scientific / academic audience.